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SUBJECT: US VETOES DRAFT RESOLUTION ON MIDDLE EAST SITUATION

REF: STATE 115170

¶1. The U.S. July 13 cast a no vote -- its first in nearly two years -- to veto an unbalanced Qatari-sponsored resolution on the current Palestinian-Israeli situation in the Middle East. The final vote was 10-1(US)-4(UK, Denmark, Slovakia and Peru).

Ambassador Bolton's Statement  
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¶2. Ambassador Bolton (per reftel instructions) delivered the U.S. explanation of vote (EOV):

Begin Statement:

Mr. President, we are all aware of the delicate situation in the Middle East, where new and major developments are unfolding as we speak. In light of the fluid and volatile nature of events on the ground, the United States believes this draft Resolution is not only untimely, but already outmoded. We have just recently witnessed a major escalation by Hizballah. On top of that, we have the announcement that the Secretary-General will be sending a team to the region to help resolve the situation. These important new developments should be reflected in any text we consider.

Notwithstanding these new developments, there were many other reasons to reject this draft. The draft Resolution before the Council was unbalanced. It placed demands on one side in the Middle East conflict but not the other. This draft Resolution would have exacerbated tensions in the region and would have undermined our vision of two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security.

Passage would also have undermined the credibility of the Security Council, which itself must be seen by both sides as an honest broker in the Middle East conflict. In this regard, public statements of UN officials must also accurately reflect positions agreed by member governments.

The United States worked hard with other delegations to achieve a more balanced text, one which acknowledged that Israeli military actions were in direct response to repeated rocket attacks into Southern Israel from Gaza and the June 25 abduction of Israeli Defense Force Corporal Gilad Shalit by Hamas. Regrettably, we were not able to reach consensus.

While we remain gravely concerned about the deterioration of the situation in the West Bank and Gaza, we remain steadfast in our conviction that the best way to resolve the immediate crisis is for Hamas to secure the safe and unconditional release of Corporal Shalit.

Establishing the foundations for a lasting peace, however, will require us to focus our attention not just on Hamas, but on the state sponsors of terror who back them -- particularly

Syria and Iran. Let us be clear that without the financial and material support of Damascus and Tehran, Hamas would be severely crippled in carrying out its terrorist operations. We call upon Syria and Iran to end their role as state sponsors of terror and unequivocally condemn the actions of Hamas, including this kidnapping. We yet again call upon Syria to arrest Hamas ringleader, Khaled Meshal, who currently resides in Damascus. We stress again our condemnation of Syrian and Iranian support of Hizballah, which has claimed responsibility for the other kidnappings along the Blue Line between Israel and Lebanon.

We further call on the Palestinian Authority government to stop all acts of violence and terror and comply with the principles enunciated by the Quartet: renounce terror, recognize Israel, and accept previous obligations and agreements, including the Roadmap. The failure of the Palestinian Authority government to take these steps hurts the Palestinian people.

We are obviously concerned about the duration of the present difficulties and the lack of a solution, but the issue for us is whether action by the Council makes such a solution more or less likely, not simply whether or not the Council seems to be "engaged".

The United States remains firmly committed to working with others to establish the foundations for a lasting peace in the region -- a foundation that would have been undermined had this draft Resolution passed.  
End Statement.

Peru, Denmark, Slovakia and UK EOVs  
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USUN NEW Y 00001367 002 OF 002

13. Peru, Denmark, Slovakia and UK made EOVs to explain their abstentions. Peru said that the draft did not adequately reflect the facts on the ground, specifically the kidnapping of the soldiers and the firing of Qassam rockets into Israel that precipitated the Israeli response. Nor did the resolution mention failure to comply with the Quartet principles by the PA. Peru called for the release of the Gilad Shalit as well as illegally detained Palestinians. Denmark also said it abstained because the draft resolution did not adequately reflect the facts on the ground. Denmark called for the release of Palestinian legislators and for the Palestinian leadership to bring an end to the violence and to immediately arrange the release of detained Israel soldier. Slovakia called for the release of all abducted persons, and noted the draft resolution's failure to call on Palestinians to adhere to Quartet principles as well as the absence of any reference to events occurring on the Blue Line. UK said that the text was not sufficiently balanced and did not reflect the facts on the ground. The UK also regretted that the sponsors of the draft resolution had not provided greater opportunity for discussion. UK called for the release of Cpl. Shalit, called for an end to rocket attacks on Israel and noted that Israel had the right to self-defense, which should be carried out in a measured way.

Palestinian, Israeli Statements  
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14. Palestine and Israel, both invited to participate in the meeting, also spoke, Palestinian Permanent Observer Riyad Mansour's comments, which focused on the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure and suffering of the Palestinian people as a result of Israeli actions, provided not a single reference to any Palestinian actions -- the abduction of an Israeli soldier, the firing of Qassam missiles into Israel.

15. In his statement, Israeli PR Dan Gillerman thanked the U.S. "for its bold stand" and for other Member States who abstained on the resolution. Gillerman said that a year ago

Israel disengaged from Gaza and six years ago, Israel had withdrawn from southern Lebanon. Neither were easy processes for Israel. And in each case, the Palestinians and the Lebanese respectively had choices: either to care for their people and improve the quality of life or allow their territory to be used as bases for terrorism. Tragically, in each case they had chosen the latter -- that the respective governments had chosen to make their own people hostage to terror. Israel had withdrawn from these territories, but would not permit these areas to be used as launching pads for terrorist action.

16. Gillerman said that Israel had been under attack and had taken the necessary steps to defend it self only after all international efforts to mediate had failed. He said also that the world was witnessing the actions of Hamas and Hizbollah but they were simply the executioners of the Syria and Iran, which he referred to as an axis of terror. On persistent Arab characterizations of Israel as "the Occupying power," Gillerman said that Israel does not want to control Palestinian lives and that it is not Israel but Terror that is the "occupying power" of the Israeli, Palestinian and Lebanese people. Finally asking, rhetorically, what colleagues would do if their own countries were under attack, borders infiltrated, and citizens kidnapped. And he answered that they would do exactly what Israel is doing now to protect its people.

BOLTON